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HOMŒOPATHY.

It is well for the animal machine that it is so constituted that the causes which derange it give rise, in many instances, to a series of actions which result in its restoration to health. In other words, it is a great blessing that diseases will very frequently, nay, in a vast majority of cases, get well of themselves without the doctor's aid, and even in spite of his interference. But this blessing, like all else that is good, is liable to abuse and capable of being converted into a curse, by fallen, depraved, money-loving man. This curative power, so wisely and beneficially bestowed on organized beings, is converted into a means of livelihood and breastwork of defence by quacks and impostors, those worse than Gothic invaders of the medical profession. They administer their drugs—the patient recovers notwithstanding their nullity or want of adaptation to the disease ; and the case is trumpeted forth as a remarkable cure, attested by certificates from Tom, Dick, and Harry, and some preacher ! Who can resist such testimony ? But for this inherent healing power in the system, the Hydra of empiricism would not have an existence. If, like a watch or clock, the animal machine, when it became deranged, had no power to repair itself, none but scientific workmen would dare undertake the task of repairing it. But it has this power in a great degree, and the dishonest pretender profits by it. He administers his impotent, if not hurtful nostrums, when nature is doing the work of healing, and thus robs her of her well-earned glory. Nature indulges in the modest silence of merit. Not so the charlatan. He blows his own trumpet, and pointing to the pills, the elixir, or the globules, exclaims to a gullible public, these be thy saviors, oh ! suffering mortals ! Life is precious ; medicine an arcanum ; the incurable still hope on when science forbids it. The quack promises. The sick man cannot realize that human beings can be so base as designedly to deceive him under circumstances so melancholy, and he takes the gilded bait so temptingly held out. Thus it is that these impostors levy heavy contributions at the verge of the grave on human frailty and misery.

We proposed when we sat down to devote a page or two to Homœopathy. In the mere treatment of disease this system, as carried out by its advocates, is not chargeable with any sins of *commission*. Its sins are those of *omission*. It is a lazy system ; all it has to do is to expect, for though it makes a pretence of doing somewhat, it does nothing, basing

its prospect of success on the fact that a vast majority of diseases will get well of themselves. The homœopath does no harm *directly*, because the articles which he administers can have no effect at all. But he does harm, indirectly, by preventing the administration of remedies in those cases in which they are very much needed. Here the sin of omission is as grave as that of commission.

Of the doctrines "*similia similibus*," "*contraria contrariis*," we shall say but little. That to some extent, in some cases, a similar affection excited in a diseased organ may relieve the original affection, we shall not deny. Thus, cold applications are found serviceable to frozen limbs; yet it might be contended that in this case the cure is effected on the principle "*contraria, contrariis curantur*," for friction is used at the same time, which excites a degree of warmth. The continued application of snow would evidently destroy the vitality of the limb. The object is gradually, *very gradually*, to warm it—" *contraria contrariis*." But we do not propose a criticism of this leading principle of homœopathy. There is doubtless some truth in it—though not so much as in the Galeneal dogma to which it is opposed, "*contraria contrariis*," viz.: That diseases are cured by medicines calculated to produce *directly* opposite states.

The doctrine of revulsion, which seems to belong to neither of these categories, embraces a larger number of facts than either of them. Nothing is better established in therapeutics, than that an inflammation or congestion in one part is relieved by exciting the same in *other parts*. It is by *revulsion* that a vast portion of our remedial agents effect the cure of diseases—but we do not intend writing an essay on the *modus operandi* of medicines.

We assert that homœopathy, whatever of truth there may be in some of its speculations, is perfectly inert in practice; and if we fail in proving this assertion true, then facts are mere illusions; logic a humbug, and reasoning a farce. To proceed:—In the first place, our disposition to try all things, has induced us to try the "*globules*." We have used them to ascertain their *pathogenetic* effects; we have taken the sulphur, but it caused nothing like the itch, which was promised us; we have used the quinine, without experiencing the slightest symptom of a chill; the belladonna, and nothing like hydrophobia followed. This we did at the suggestion of a homœopathic practitioner. We have also tried these articles on some friends, without the slightest result. We have used the "*globules*" in affections which we were confident would *get well of themselves*. Here they were successful, the patient got well! But then we tried another experiment. We selected several cases which we felt confident would *not get well of themselves*, and these we subjected to the treatment of one who ranked high as a homœopathic practitioner. The result was, in every instance, a complete and *triumphant failure*.

We offer these facts as some proof of the assertion we have made, viz.: That homœopathy is a *nullity*. Common sense *a priori* rejects it as such—man is incapable of being influenced by so small a thing as

the infinitesimal dose ; a quantity so ineffably little that the imagination aided by a microscope cannot follow it in the abyss of its utter nothingness, or even approximate an appreciation of the extent of its nibility ! Some of the "higher" (not the highest) "dilutions," as they are called, are weaker than would be a drop of laudanum *well mixed* with the waters of the Pacific Ocean ! or a grain of belladonna dissolved in Noah's deluge, or a grain of musk attenuated by the entire atmosphere of our globe. This is easily proved by actual calculation. Now we say that the elements of this world, though separated from each other sufficiently for the *final causes* of creation, are mixed up with each other in stronger doses than these. The atmosphere we breathe receives the exhalations from the poisonous hemlock ; the water we drink is impregnated with lime and many other elements from the organic and inorganic kingdoms ; the food which sustains us contains many articles used as medicine. We are constantly subject to the operations of these things in doses fortunately too small to produce any *appreciable effect*, yet in doses ten thousand times stronger than the "higher dilutions." Many thousands of pounds of opium are doubtless dissolved in the ocean from shipwreck or otherwise ; these waters are exhaled and showered down in fertilizing rains and dews ; the finest chemical test can detect none of the principles of opium here, and yet they must exist in quantities larger than in even the tenth dilution of the homœopath. The human system takes in daily of sulphur, iron, lime, muriate of soda, &c. &c., quantities a thousand times larger than the doses of these articles administered homœopathically ; and yet the system is not appreciably affected by these comparatively enormous doses administered by nature.

There is more sulphur in one egg than would be given (if the highest triturations were used), in a thousand years at the rate of a globule an hour, and yet the system is not appreciably influenced by the sulphur in an egg. From these well-established facts we are forced to conclude that homœopathy is a nullity.

As already remarked, the various elements and combinations of the material world are so diffused throughout each other, *so mingled*, that larger doses of them are constantly acting on the human system than the dose used by the homœopath.

The blacksmith inhales at one inspiration, a larger amount of charcoal than the homœopath would administer in his life time, though he arrive at three score and ten. The boy who enters the apothecaries' shop to get a prescription filled, inhales more of every article capable of giving out odor, than a homœopathist would administer in forty doses. A glass of common spring water contains more carbonate of lime than he would use in twenty years' practice !! All these articles, thus necessarily taken, produce no appreciable effect. Therefore the homœopathic dose is a nullity.

But, says the hero of small doses, "*when a part is diseased it becomes extremely sensible to a medicine calculated to produce a similar disease.*" There is a grain of truth in this proposition—that is to say, when the

stomach is inflamed by the use of tartar, it is extremely sensitive to ipecac, or any other irritant. To illustrate this principle, as it is called, a homeopathic writer observes—"That when a person is in an ill humor, a little additional irritation will throw him into an absolute rage," and that when the eye is inflamed, even light will irritate it. These facts prove that a disease may be aggravated, not cured, by a small dose of a substance calculated to produce the same or a similar affection, and are at war with the fundamental principle of the system—"similia similibus curantur"—for vexing an irritated person makes him worse; the light to an inflamed eye does the same. To cure these two states we evidently proceed on the principle—*contraria contrariis curantur*"—we soothe the irritated man—we afford darkness to the inflamed eye, or we let them alone to get well of themselves, which is the essence of the homeopathic practice. But we deny that the infinitesimal dose has even the power of aggravating disease, though it be calculated to produce (in a sufficient dose) the same affection. It would be easy to test this. Take the tenth or twentieth dilution of tartar emetic, which would be about equal to a grain of this medicine dissolved in—say, Chouteau's pond—though this falls far short of the fact—and ascertain whether it would vomit in any condition of the stomach.

But, again, say the defenders of small globules, *the rubbing—the triturat*ion of the medicines increases their power and activity. Some of them say that it spiritualizes matter to rub it! Hence they grind their medicines very fine, and shake the vial of drops—they rub about six minutes at each trituration, and shake about six times at each dilution, though Hahnemann says that he had to reduce his shakes, so powerful did six make it!!

Now any one that is in danger of believing this monstrous nonsense, can easily test its truth or falsehood. A certain amount of arsenic will kill a dog—a small dose, say the half of a grain, will not hurt him. Give the dog, then, a half grain of arsenic, and watch its effects—then take another half grain, and triturate it and grind it and rub it until it is spiritualized and strengthened as much as is possible by this process—then dilute it and shake it well *sixty times six*, and give to the aforesaid dog. If homœopathy be true, it will kill him in a very short time—if homœopathy be false, the dog will go about his business. An easier test would be to ascertain if shaking a tea-spoonful of brandy would enable it to make a man drunk. It would do so if homœopathy be true.

Why, if this principle were sound, then the apothecary might double his stock at an hour's warning, not by the difficult and expensive process of importing fresh medicines, but by the easy one of *shaking* what he had on hand. The liquid that was worth but one dollar, the dose being twenty drops, would be rendered of double that value by a few shakes, which would so strengthen it that ten drops would suffice! Sailors and soldiers would find this principle of great value—they would put a phial of whisky in their pockets, and by shaking it, have grog enough for a voyage or campaign! Nay, armies might subsist on a little portable soup, increased in power and spiritualized by shaking! What an in-

vention for starving Ireland ; what a great trade shaking would be if homœopathy were not a humbug. Instead of endeavoring to accumulate, the world would sit down satisfied to shake what it has already gotten !

Of all the systems that it has been our lot to examine, that of Thomson not excepted, homœopathy is the most absurd. That there may be some truth mingled (*highly diluted*) with the transcendental balderdash which constitutes its principles, we may with safety admit. All errorists and impostors cover over with the sugar of truth and plausibility the bait designed for a gullible world—but for this no stomach could endure it. We have looked into the works on homœopathy with the desire of arriving at truth—we have no medical prepossessions or prejudices ; whatever proposes the relief of suffering humanity we are ready to examine with impartiality. In this frame of mind have we read and reasoned on the theory of Hahnemann. When informed that "*like cures like (similia similibus)*," we felt disposed rather to continue the investigation than to condemn. Of the dogma that diseased parts are excessively sensible to medicines calculated to produce a similar disease, we said "*let that pass.*" But we could not swallow the small dose—not even the first dilution. The assertion that shaking and rubbing increased the strength and power of matter to an almost indefinite extent, we could not avoid characterizing as absurd, and at war alike with common sense and the plainest principles of philosophy. The spiritualizing of matter by this means, we were obliged to designate a wilder fancy than the reverie of a lunatic. The dissolving and attenuating of a drop of medicine until it was more diffused and weak than the multitudinous seas could make it—this we thought either the most stupendous folly ever perpetrated by run-mad speculation, or the most arrant knavery ever practised by a mercenary juggler ; and when the dilutions rose to the *tenth*, and the waters of the universe failed in the computation—when they rose to the twentieth, to the thirtieth, and ocean on ocean, deluge on deluge, sufficed not to attenuate the drop, and imagination became bewildered as when it seeks an end to eternity, or a boundary to space, we could add nothing more, our vocabulary was exhausted.—*St. Louis Medical and Surgical Journal.*

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#### ON THE USE OF THE CHIMAPHILA UMBELLATA IN THE TREATMENT OF FUNGOUS ARTICULI, OR WHITE SWELLING.

By Y. C. Blakey, M.D., Glasgow, Howard Co., Mo.

UNDER the name of white swelling, several diseases of the joints have been considered as one and the same, but which differ in many respects. Brodie's arrangement, which I consider as good or better than any other, is as follows : 1st. Inflammation of the synovial membrane ; 2nd. Morbid change of structure in the synovial membrane ; 3d. Ulceration of the cartilages of the joints ; 4th. Scrofulous disease of the joints, having its origin in the cancellous structure of the bones. As I do not consider

it necessary upon the present occasion to enter into any disquisition, relative to the above forms of this disease, as it respects either the opinions of Brodie or others, I shall merely give the outlines of my treatment of several cases, which entirely relieved the sufferers. The first case, which I shall present nearly verbatim from my own case book, is as follows:

Feb. 5th, 1844.—Wyatt, aged 17 years, the servant of Mrs. E., was brought to my house in a carriage. On inquiry, I found he had been more or less affected about one of his knees for some time, and for several weeks before he was sent to my care had been attended by a neighboring physician, without any change for the better, but gradually got worse. This boy was of a scrofulous family, as his mother was affected with it for years, and still has more or less swelling in the glands of the neck; and his brother (there were but two children) died two years ago with every symptom of phthisis pulmonalis.

When I examined my patient, I found one of his knees three times its natural size, the skin of the leg of an unnatural ashy color, the boy being tolerably black for one of his race; considerable wasting of the limb, pulse 96, and some white fur upon his tongue. I looked upon the case as scrofulous white swelling, and concluded in my own mind there could be little done towards effecting a radical cure, as I had often treated and seen such cases treated, but had never known a cure to follow, but more or less lameness to inevitably succeed all our efforts, if we did not ultimately have to resort to the knife to rescue the sufferer from the grave.

6th.—The boy disturbed my family last night with his incessant moans, from the excruciating pain he suffered all night. To-night I gave him an anodyne, and after duly weighing his case came to the conclusion to give a trial to the *chimaphila umbellata*, as the iodine, blisters, setons, &c. &c., had been used already in his case without benefit.

7th.—I commenced giving my patient the infusion of pipsissewa, a pint to be drank each day. The formula for making it I took from Wood and Bache's Dispensatory, and twice a-day, morning and night, I had a fresh poultice made of oat-meal and the infusion, and applied to the whole knee; diet light, and to keep the recumbent position. To-night, I gave him another anodyne.

8th.—Found no difference in the case, and continued up the above course each day until the 14th, when I did not give him his accustomed anodyne; notwithstanding, heard no complaint from its omission. He did not complain sufficiently after this to require any anodynes, but continued gradually to mend, his swelling about the knee to diminish, until the end of March he could walk without a crutch or support of any kind, and on the 15th of April I discharged him cured. He remains up to the present time entirely well, and has as much strength in one knee as the other.

July 10th.—An old case I had formerly treated by the usual remedies, was brought to me to extract some pieces of bone which had exfoliated; this I accomplished, and commenced the same course with this patient, Mr. A. D., as the boy already described, when, after the persevering use of the *chimaphila* for three or four months, the running from the different

openings in the upper portion of the arm, as this patient's swelling was the head of the os humeri, closed, and he has not been annoyed by his disease up to the present time. I could present other cases, but as these are sufficient to invite the attention of the profession to the use of this article in the treatment of this horrid disease, the " opprobrium " of our art, I shall leave it to the consideration of my professional brethren, with the hope that I have thrown in a " mite " that will be of benefit to suffering humanity.—*Medical Examiner.*

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**ANIMAL CHARCOAL AN ANTIDOTE TO POISON.**

ON Monday, November 17th, 1845, Dr. A. B. Garrod read a paper before the Medical Society of London, on Animal Charcoal as an Antidote to various Poisons, especially those derived from the animal and vegetable kingdoms. The following is an abstract of the paper, which will appear in the forth-coming volume of the Society's Transactions :

Dr. Garrod first noticed the experiments which had of late been made on the effects of animal charcoal in removing bitter principles from their solution, and then detailed his own experiments which led him to use it as an antidote. The results he had arrived at were,

1st. That animal charcoal removed the active principles from vegetable and animal substances when added in proper quantities, even in a solution, imitating the gastric juice, and at the temperature of the stomach (100° Fahr.).

2d. That animal charcoal will also form compounds with arsenious acid and other mineral substances, removing these from their solutions, and that it is quite equal, if not superior, to the hydrated sesquioxide of iron, as an antidote to arsenious acid.

3d. That the compounds of the animal charcoal with the poisonous principles have no injurious action on the animal body, and therefore, when the charcoal is given with the poison, or before it has become absorbed into the system, it will act as an antidote.

4th. A certain amount of the antidote is required, depending on the quantity of active principle contained in the poison; half an ounce is more than sufficient for twenty grains of *nux vomica*, or one grain of *strychnia*; if less is given, the poison may act by its excess above the antidote.

5th. The antidote is peculiarly adapted to poisonous substances whose activity depends on a small quantity of an active principle, as opium, *nux vomica*, the aconites, belladonna, stramonium, tobacco, hemlock, &c.

6th. The antidote itself may be given to almost any amount, as it exerts no injurious action on the body.

7th. That it is of great importance that good animal charcoal should be used, not the bone or ivory black, which contain about .92 of earthy matter, but the *carbo-animalis purificatus* of the London Pharmacopœia. Common bone black was found to be very far inferior, certainly not possessing a fifth of the antidotal power. The vegetable charcoal was comparatively inert.

Dr. Garrod proposes, that in cases of poisoning we should remove as much of the poison as possible by means of the stomach-pump or emetics, and then give a large quantity of the animal charcoal diffused in warm water, or the antidote may be given with the emetic, but ipecacuanha must not be used, as the charcoal would destroy its emetic property. Sulphate of zinc, or some other mineral emetic, should be chosen. Dr. Garrod also suggests that perhaps animal charcoal would prevent the action of the poison of rabies, syphilis, serpents, &c., if applied in the form of a poultice to the part which has come into contact with the poison, and that it may prove serviceable as a remedy in some diseases, from its great power of absorbing all principles.—*Pharm. Jour.*

#### **TUBERCULAR PHTHISIS, WITH EXTENSIVE ULCERATION OF THE LARYNX.**

By John L. Vandervoort, M.D., of New York.

Miss \_\_\_\_\_, aged 28 years, was attacked in July, 1845, with cough of an ordinary kind, coming on at intervals, either at night or early in the morning, and without expectoration. After continuing in this way for six or eight weeks, symptoms of difficulty in the larynx began to manifest themselves; these at first were very obscure, but after attentively watching the case, the conviction was strong in my mind that ulceration of the cartilages and membrane lining that organ was going on. The patient was of a peculiarly nervous temperament, very liable to violent paroxysms of hysteria; this gave rise to the suspicion that the cough was of this character, it being of a dry, hacking nature. This opinion was at first entertained by myself, and was coincided in by a gentleman who saw the patient in consultation. Various means were resorted to for her relief, such as expectorants, emetics, tonics, mercurials, rubefacients, anodynes, blisters with morphine sprinkled on the raw surface, and the local application of a strong solution of nitrate of silver. No obvious relief following the employment of these remedies, and the aspect of the patient having undergone considerable change, together with slight emaciation, led to the suspicion of the existence of tubercles in one or both lungs. This opinion was confirmed by an examination of the chest, which was made by Dr. Swett, who detected the existence of tubercles in the summit of the right lung.

The disease of the lungs continued to progress unattended by any peculiar phenomena; not so, however, that of the larynx. The ulceration of the membrane and cartilages of this organ, progressed from month to month, and gave rise not only to a very distressing cough, and intense dyspnoea, but to very great difficulty and pain in swallowing, especially liquids. For about two months prior to her death, she scarcely took anything but the blandest liquids, and these passing through the ulcerated openings into the trachea, often occasioned a vast amount of suffering.

About three days before her death, which took place the last of July, she expectorated pus quite freely; during this period her breathing was much easier and deglutition less painful.

An examination of the body was made six hours after death. The following was the condition of the lungs and larynx:

The lungs were completely studded with tubercles in various stages; at the summit of the right lung was an abscess capable of holding about eight ounces; considerable serum was found in the chest.

The liver was of enormous size and of a mottled color; the left lobe a little softened; other abdominal organs healthy.

The larynx presented a mass of disease; the investing membrane was studded with granules of variable size, some of them being nearly as large as a split pea; by the process of ulceration it was completely detached from the cricoid cartilages, and could, by the means of a probe, be entirely raised from these bodies. By the side of these cartilages were ulcers of the size of a five-cent piece, which communicated with the oesophagus. The connecting ligaments were gone, except one which was much thickened. The epiglottis was much thickened, and the arytenoid cartilages were nearly destroyed by ulceration.—*The Annalist.*

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APOPLEXY FROM THE RUPTURE OF AN ANEURISM OF THE ARTERIA CEREBRI MEDIA.

By E. M. Hodder, O.M., Toronto.

MASTER H., æt. 10 years, fair complexion and highly nervous temperament, received a severe shock at about half past 9 o'clock, P. M., on the 4th of November last, in consequence of a fire, which at the moment was supposed to be in the building in which his father had his offices. The child had always been observed to become highly nervous whenever the alarm of fire was given. He had a largely-developed head, pale countenance, a somewhat delicate constitution, and generally depraved appetite, preferring crude vegetables and unripe fruits to more wholesome food.

In consequence of this, he suffered occasionally from derangement of the stomach and bowels, always attended with severe headache; but an occasional emetic and purgatives relieved him in a day or two.

Three or four weeks prior to the present date, he had had an attack as above described, during which time he complained very much of his head, but for the last fortnight he had appeared in perfect health.

On the alarm of fire being given, he ran into the street, but returned immediately to the house and watched the progress of the flames from a bed-room window; in three or four minutes he gave a sudden and violent scream, complaining of acute pain in the head, behind the left eye; the pain continued some minutes (two or three), during which time he uttered frequent screams.

He was taken down stairs to the sofa by his mother, but finding himself uncomfortable there, he walked into the next room, and was assisted on to the bed. His mother ran out of the room for a glass of water, and upon her return found that he had fallen off the bed, and was completely insensible.

Drs. Rolph and Rankin were the first medical men who saw him; he

was still insensible, the surface of the body cold, pulse very slow and thready, in fact scarcely perceptible, as were also the carotids; the right pupil was much dilated, the left contracted, his breathing spasmodic, with long intervals between each inspiration, the bronchi charged with mucus, producing a very loud râle, and threatening suffocation. A few drops of blood flowed from his mouth when first attacked.

On my arrival, about half an hour from his seizure, his breathing had become more regular, the râle somewhat diminished, and the pulse, which was still very slow (45), rather more perceptible, but in other respects he continued as above described.

He remained in this state until about 10, P. M., the pulse at times a mere thread, at others somewhat fuller; the mucus now increased in quantity, the respiration becoming more laborious and spasmodic, the left pupil began to dilate, and bloody frothy mucus flowed in large quantities from the nose and mouth until about half past 10, P. M., when he expired.

*Section cadaveris*, fifteen hours after death.—The face and body generally were pale and exsanguine, but the ears and posterior part of the scalp were of a purple color. On dividing the scalp half an ounce of dark fluid blood flowed from the wound; the bones of the cranium also bled freely when cut with the saw.

On removing the calvarium, the dura mater was found highly congested, and between it and the tunica arachnoides on the left side, an extensive clot of extravasated blood was perceived extending from the middle of the anterior to the back part of the posterior lobes of the cerebrum, and reaching upwards to within an inch of the sagittal suture. On removing the brain from the skull, blood was found extensively extravasated between the pia mater and the substance of the brain, particularly around the circle of Willis, and more on the left than on the right side. The exact spot from which it had flowed could not be found until a very careful dissection of the arteries was made, commencing with the basilar.

At the termination of the internal carotid in the arteria communicans posterior, arteria cerebri anterior, and arteria cerebri media, a small clot was discovered which seemed to proceed from one of the above-named vessels, and upon a more minute examination, the arteria cerebri media was found dilated about a quarter of an inch from its origin to the size of a small garden pea, which dilatation was filled with a clot connected with the small external coagulum above mentioned, by means of an irregularly shaped opening in the dilated part of the artery, and from which it was evident the whole of the blood had flowed. The continuation of the arteria cerebri media in the fissure of Sylvius was normal. The brain itself, although very large, was perfectly healthy, nor were there more vascular clots perceived on cutting it than usual. The lateral ventricles contained about 3 ij. each of bloody serum. The plexus choroides in the left lateral ventricle was somewhat paler than that on the opposite side, a fact arising no doubt from the rupture of the arteria cerebri media, so near the origin of the artery of the plexus choroides.

*Chest*.—The lungs were somewhat congested, particularly their poste-

rior portion, nor did they crepitate as much as in their healthy condition ; on cutting into them, a very large quantity of frothy mucus, tinged with blood, flowed, and the trachea and bronchi were completely filled with the same. Each pleural cavity contained about two ounces of clear serum.

The heart appeared to us as if the left ventricle had contracted very firmly on a hard clot, as it gave the idea of being completely solid, but upon opening it, its cavity was quite empty, but its walls thickened or hypertrophied to very nearly an inch. The other cavities and valves were quite healthy. The thymus gland was very large for a boy of his age. The whole of the abdominal viscera were quite healthy—the bladder was half filled with urine.—*British American (Montreal) Journal of Medical Science.*

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#### BETTERING GOOD HEALTH.

"A THEORY prevails that long life runs in families, and yet Sir John Sinclair found that amongst 508 persons who had passed the age of 80, only 303 could make it appear that they had even one parent, male or female, who had been as old as themselves. All *data* on the subject is involved in confusion ; and it must be still more confused ; for although we have better means than formerly for arriving at statistical facts and details, individual habits become more diversified as commerce increases, as the powers of intermixture and change of locality are multiplied ; and as knowledge, mixed with error, and diversified to infinity, is diffused among all classes, both of rich and poor, individual diversities become beyond all calculation, and defy all powers of classifying and generalizing. Alcohol slays its thousands and tens of thousands amongst the poor, and quackery, with ill-directed passions, performs the same service for the rich—quackery, not only advertised and wholesale, but individual and secret. A short digressive anecdote, which I had from a friend, may be both illustrative and amusing.

"Sitting in the parlor of an eminent administrator of very useful medicated baths, in Marlborough street, a gentleman entered the room full of sturdy health, and overflowing with fine animated spirits.

"Sir," said he, "I suppose you are going to take a medicated bath?"

"No, sir, I am waiting for a friend who is taking one. I have perfect health."

"Sir, I take one every day, well or ill, and generally two a day."

"I have never taken five shillings worth of medicine in my life."

"Oh ! sir, I see you are a most temperate liver."

"No, sir, I am ashamed to say, that from 18 to the present hour, I have been the reverse. Of all men living, my poor father was the most regular and temperate, and his afflictions were many, severe and fatal."

"Aye, aye, I see how it is. When Judge —— found any witnesses of extreme old age, he questioned them as to their habits, and made memoranda of their answers. He discovered that the temperate

and intemperate were about equal, but he found that *all* healthy persons and long-livers were early risers. You, sir, must be a very, **very** early riser—a very early riser indeed!

"Quite the reverse, sir—my Parliamentary duties are such, that, in London, my average hour of going to bed is three in the morning, and my hour of rising, twelve."

"After this it was clear that not a word I said, or had said, was believed. The theorist imagined that the consistency of health with irregularity and late hours, was so impossible, that the assertion was a most impudent imposition.

"Sir," cried he, in a tone of offended consequence, "only try the experiment. Go to bed and get up early, and when you rise you will find yourself able to grasp your handful of half-pence at arms-length as firmly as a giant; get up next day an hour later, and you grasp them feebly; get up next day two hours later, and you will find you cannot grasp them at all—no, sir, not at all."

"Bless you, sir, get up any hour I may, I can grasp, as firmly as a vice, more sovereigns than I shall ever possess."

"Sir," said this victim of quackery, evidently disbelieving every word I said, "I was going down Regent street yesterday, when I felt in my head I don't know how—it was a certain sort of I don't know what—an indescribable something—a-ah—a-ah—I can't exactly explain myself, but you must know very well what I mean; so I went into a doctor's shop, and said, give me three grains of calomel, seven of jalap, four of rhubarb, with—and—and—all of which I find agree with my constitution; and so, sir, I took the dose, and went home, and said to my wife, Now, my dear, I will take no food to-day—I am determined to give nature fair play."

"Sir," said I, breaking out into a feigned fit of impatience, and almost of indignation, "is that what you call fair play?—you turn your stomach into a doctor's shop—you swamp, overwhelm poor nature—Burke her, till she is nearly extinct, and this you call giving nature fair play—a plague on *such* fair play!"

"Here the bath was announced, and the sturdy, non-ailing gentleman went to take his cure for non-ailments."

#### ON THE CAUSES OF DISEASE.

[Communicated for the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal.]

It may seem somewhat unscientific to speak of diseases that have sprung up *spontaneously* in the system; and whether we call diseases *units* or *effects*, or whatever we call them, one thing is certain, that they always have their *proper causes*. These causes may with great propriety be arranged under the three terms in common use, viz., *proximate*, *remote*, and *specific*. The first is the disease itself, situated in the fibres or fluids of the body. The *remote* are the external, exciting and predisposing causes. The latter, or the *specific*, is *contagion*, be it what it may. Much has been said and written about contagion, but to very little purpose. A

wire-drawn distinction has been made between contagion and infection, but it seems that we are none the wiser. What is said to the contrary notwithstanding, we are inclined to think that there is one *general rule* in regard to this matter, which deserves a prominent place in all our hygienic measures; to wit, that all those diseases which are called contagious, are propagated from one person to another, by means of some remote or exciting cause. In other words, there can be no such thing as contagion where external circumstances are positively unfavorable to it. We apprehend that disease in itself alone possesses no inherent and sufficient efficacy to propagate itself. A disease is not unfrequently, though vulgarly, said to be *catching*, and that without any reference at all to the *predisposing* cause, whilst the accurate observer will detect in every case certain essential facilities for the passage of contagion from one person to another. There is also another consideration. Where there is no *exciting* cause *within* the system, the matter of contagion (supposing it to have advanced into the interior) is very likely to be repelled and overthrown. External circumstances conspiring with a predisposed state of the system, may bring about an extensive prevalence of disease. It would be well, therefore, for all persons to consider their external circumstances, and also pay as good attention as possible to their internal condition. The *empiric*, however, will not take our advice, as it is his resolution to take *none*. But there is a portion of the unlettered part of the community, who, through a sort of self respect, will still take advice and be thankful. And here we cannot fail to notice one prominent trait in the character of the *quack*. Being himself grossly ignorant, he refuses to be enlightened and even ridicules those who attempt to instruct him. But to return to the main subject. We may take a certain position or *stand-point* (which we shall not dare to call a theory), from which we hope to determine the cause or causes of several diseases. The position, or *stand-point*, is, that *every individual would enjoy health were it not for certain peculiar circumstances in which he is placed*. In other words, it was the original design of infinite wisdom and goodness in the structure of the creature-man, that through the co-operation of all the healthy organs or the sound parts of the system, *good health* should be the uniform and lasting result. We might here go on to show how well adapted these organs and vessels are (so far as the present state of anatomy and physiology assure us), towards bringing about the same point or result; but we shall leave that for the present, and proceed to point out some few of the circumstances to which we have alluded.

1. *Idiosyncrasy, or constitutional peculiarity*.—Idiosyncrasy is a hard word, but it means “a peculiarity of constitution, whereby one person is affected by an agent which would produce no effect upon numerous other persons.” It is also called a vital susceptibility, possessed by some and not others. Again, it is called a peculiar temperament, possessed by some and not others. 1. It is said to be *congenital*, that is to say, *born with us*. 2. That peculiarity that may arise after birth. These peculiarities may either be *organic* or *functional*. The original design being perverted (so to speak), through the agency of circumstances, some

individuals are born with some one or more imperfect organs, or, as one expresses it, with "an excessive development of some tissue" of the body, whereby the vital functions are so modified as to fail of a healthy action, or of producing their proper effect. These peculiarities, when born with us, are justly said to be *hereditary*. When they arise after birth, and are the result of accident or habit, or some unfavorable situation, they are not, properly speaking, *hereditary*. We do not mean that all the *monstrosities*, that may happen by birth, are hereditary, nor shall we pretend to explain every wonder of that sort. It is sufficient for our present purpose to remind the reader of what is considered hereditary in order to put him upon the consideration of such matters in his endeavors to procure or preserve good health. The subject of *antipathies* will also be passed over, as our limits will not allow us to dwell upon it, however interesting it may seem to be to some. The peculiarities of constitution which are pronounced hereditary, and also those which arise after birth, are the proper sources of what are called predispositions to particular diseases. Where predisposition exists, stimulants, we are told, will produce an undue "exaltation of vital properties," and this is said to be irritation, and by way of an "abstraction of stimuli," in such a condition, it is said there will be *debility*.

II. *Climate*.—It is the opinion of some, that the influence of climate upon the health of individuals is not so great or so extensive, as it has been represented. Others contend that it is improper to say that climate, as such, has any proper influence at all. Be it as it may, we hesitate not to allege that we readily concur with those who attribute certain diseases to climate. Climate is defined to be the direct or oblique incidence of the sun's rays, whereby a greater or less degree of heat is experienced. Accordingly, we hear of cold climates and hot climates, and such as, comparatively speaking, are called temperate. It is admitted, however, that the situation of countries, as being high or low, the nature of the soil, the extent of continent, the vicinity of mountains, forests, marshes, lakes and seas, and the course of winds, as also those causes which operate to increase the humidity of the atmosphere, characterize the climate. Some of these causes, as affecting the health of individuals, we will briefly consider.

Nothing is more common than to attribute bilious or intermittent fevers to warm climates, and inflammatory diseases to colder regions. It is found, however, that other causes may intervene to produce inflammatory disorders in warm climates, and bilious fevers and intermittents in the cold and temperate climes. The truth is, climate produces shades or degrees of difference in the same diseases, and this is, perhaps, its proper influence.

It is the opinion of a truly respectable writer, that cold in our own country, as well as in other countries, ancient and modern, has decreased in proportion as cultivation has advanced. This writer is also of the opinion that the climate in this country has been rapidly and constantly changing since the first settlement. Whether the proportion, to which he alludes, has been strictly observed throughout the country, we cannot tell, but it seems to accord with the general opinion that the seasons have

been very materially changed within a recollect or definite portion of time. We are also much inclined to accord with the celebrated Montesquieu, that "in cold countries people are more vigorous;" and still the biography of distinguished men seems to establish the maxim, that activity of mind and body frequently arises from necessity.

**III. Mode of Living.**—If particular ways or modes of living serve to produce changes in the complexion, and differences of stature and strength of body, it would seem to have some sort of influence (to say the least) upon the health of individuals. The influence of *habit*, however, is so great, that we cannot assign to any particular or peculiar mode of living, any great control over the general health of a country. If this cause has any importance, relative to the subject of preserving health, it arises from comparing one climate with another as to the mode of living, and not from a comparison of the health of individuals in the same climate.

**IV. Seasons of the Year.**—It is always necessary to guard against sudden changes from *hot* to *cold* and from *cold* to *hot*, or what may be called the *extremes* of the weather. We have only to add, under the present head, that *long and hard winters* may be very unsatisfactory to the health of those who experience them, as well as long seasons of wet weather. *Endemics*, however, make their appearance very often in dry seasons.

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**INSENSIBILITY PRODUCED BY THE INHALATION OF THE VAPOR  
OF THE ETHEREAL SOLUTION OF OPIUM.**

To the Editor of the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal.

SIR,—As it is frequently found desirable to produce insensibility in persons requiring painful operations, I have made use of the ethereal solution of opium for that purpose, with excellent success, when reduced to vapor by gentle heat, varying the amount inhaled according to the length of time required for the operation; and from the entire absence of symptoms induced by pain, and those which usually result from the excessive use of opium, I have thought the method of preparation and exhibition invaluable in removing the dread in severe, and the minor operations of surgery. As a medicinal agent in cases of pulmonary irritation, it is beyond doubt the best vehicle for the introduction of opium into the system, and will, when fairly tested by experiment, I have no doubt, prove eminently successful, in a great variety of complaints requiring sedative treatment, from the power that it possesses for the instantaneous development of its effects, through the diffusible agency of the solution. The course which I have usually pursued in preparing the combination for inhalation, is by the introduction of the quantity of the cold ethereal solution of opium required by the urgency of the symptoms, into a glass retort, and by causing a slow evaporation with moderate heat, the patient being permitted to breathe the gaseous vapor from an elastic tube affixed to the mouth of the retort. The judgment of the physician is to be exercised with regard to the quantity in-

spired, which must be regulated according to the character of the disease and the duration of the required operation. Yours, &c.

22 School street, Boston.

E. R. SMILIE.

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## THE BOSTON MEDICAL AND SURGICAL JOURNAL.

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BOSTON. OCTOBER 28, 1846.

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*National Medical Convention.*—A paper in the New York Annalist, on the next meeting of the Medical Convention, brings to mind the various comments of gentlemen in regard to the growth and probable influence of that incipient institution. In some of the States, high hopes are entertained of the success with which the deliberations of the next medical congress will be crowned. Here at the North, the frost-bound region of the republic, but especially in Massachusetts, there is a singular determination on the part of a few individuals to prevent others in the Commonwealth from holding any official relation to the assembly of medical delegates at the next session. That spirit is not general, yet it is so directed that it will be exceedingly difficult to get a majority of the Council of our State Medical Society to agree to send representatives. Some months before the first session of the Convention, the subject of participating in its labors was brought before the same Council, and having been referred to a committee, a report was made and accepted, unfavorable to the project of a general medical or national association.

Both the reasonings and conclusions of that report were, to our apprehension, diametrically opposed to the spirit of the age. It was equivalent to saying to the profession of the State of New York, "we neither ask favors, nor do we wish to confer them. We dislike all associations of the kind you propose; and because we have no interest in the pursuits of societies beyond the boundaries of this Commonwealth, it is wholly unnecessary to be represented in a body that may possibly fail to accomplish the high purposes it has in contemplation." But however much the Massachusetts Society may differ in its policy from the New York Medical Society, in the matter of elevating the professional character of our common country, it would have been decorous and proper, in our view, to have appointed gentlemen of distinction to represent the medical profession of Massachusetts. No such appointments, however, were made, and if this refusal should again be persisted in, it is thought by some that the Society will never outgrow the odium of not complying with a very civil and certainly a courteous request; especially when it is known, as it must be at some future day, in the history of the Society, that the feeling which characterized the doings of the Council was neither in accordance with the progress of public sentiment in Europe or America, in regard to the advantages accruing from the meeting of great bodies of scientific men.

The geologists of the United States have a very flourishing and popular association, holding annual conventions in the various cities. Their meetings are invariably hailed with pleasure, and the members command the civilities and unremitting attentions of the citizens in the places where

they meet. Of the value of their meetings, both to themselves and as aids in the progress and dissemination of that knowledge which is power to a nation, no evidences need be adduced. Is it not possible that medicine, and those who practise it, might also gain something by knowing each other more intimately, and by "measuring themselves by themselves" in a similar manner. By acting in accordance with the spirit that breathed through the report of the Massachusetts committee, our ancient State Society would impart no light on the subject of medicine and surgery, but such as happened to shine in Massachusetts; and would exhibit nothing social in medical intercourse beyond the same prescribed limits.

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*Baltimore Private Medical Institution.*—An examination of the circular of John R. W. Dunbar, M.D., of Baltimore, showing the objects and advantages of his private school, brings to our recollection the beautiful specimens of anatomical skill, the choice library, the extensive cabinet, &c., which he has collected for the special use of students, and which we once inspected. With the advances made in the various branches of medical science, Dr. Dunbar keeps pace by constant industry, and the purchase of new articles, and his collection, as a whole, is now not only very valuable, but superior to most private collections south of Philadelphia.

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*Extraordinary Mortality.*—Under this head the London Lancet of Sept. 19th, has the following article of medical news.

"During the hot weather, in one week, in New York, the extraordinary number of 4025 deaths occurred, or more than 1 in every 1000 inhabitants. Of these, 31 were caused by apoplexy; 21 by sun-stroke, and 52 by cholera infantum. 169 were of children under 1 year; of married women only 58 died."

The Lancet is never slow in showing up any errors or blunders made in our periodicals respecting European matters; and it should therefore have been more careful in giving publicity to such an extravagant statement as the above. On the very same page the number of deaths for one week in London is put down at 889, and one would have thought the contrast between that and the alleged number in New York would have led to the detection of the error before it was printed. In close connection with the above article in the Lancet, is the following burlesque on Mr. Oliver's ejection of a snake, last summer, in South Reading.

"To complete this story, Jonathan should have described the bulk of the after-birth, and the length of the navel-string, and made an examination of Mr. Oliver, to show that his stomach was a (sea-serpent?) womb, with the necessary female et-ceteras."

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*Medicine in France.*—The Medical Congress of France having manifested the wish that there should be constituted a Medical Association in each department, having for its aim the advancement of science and professional dignity and good feeling, an appeal has been made by the permanent commission, which acts as its representative, and which has received from it the important mission of realizing this great project. This appeal has been published very generally. The physicians of the department of

Rhone have been the first to assemble, and since then the spirit of association has been rapidly spreading throughout France.

The homeopathic Congress was to open its session for 1846 on the 5th of September. All the physicians who have studied the new medical doctrine were to be admitted there upon an application to the President or to the Secretary of the Hahnemanian Society of Paris, where would be handed them the programme of the principal scientific questions which were to be submitted to the deliberations of the assembly.

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*Mississippi Valley Association of Dental Surgeons.*—The third annual meeting of this Association, held at Cincinnati, Ohio, in August, was, we are happy to learn, very well attended. The importance of union of effort for the advancement of this department of medicine, is now beginning to be felt, as is evident by the fact that, since the organization of the American Society of Dental Surgeons, three local associations of dentists have been formed. By this means, the more respectable of the members of the profession are annually brought together, and the improvements and discoveries of all are made known to each. Besides, it affords the different members of the profession an opportunity of becoming acquainted with each other, and of cultivating friendships which would not otherwise have been formed.—*American Journal of Dental Science.*

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*Arkansas Oil Stone.*—For the information of those who may not be aware of the fact, we take pleasure in stating, that the owners of the quarry of this valuable stone have had a large quantity of it prepared in pieces of various sizes, expressly for the use of dentists, and that it may be had of Mr. Leach, of Baltimore, and at the establishments of Messrs. Stockton & Co., in Philadelphia and New York. For sharpening excavators and every other description of dental instruments, it is by far superior to anything we have ever used. While it cuts away an instrument with great rapidity, it at the same time leaves a perfectly smooth and keen edge upon it. We have several pieces that were presented to us by Dr. Vancamp, of Nashville, one of the owners of the quarry, which we use for smoothing the surface of plugs in teeth, preparatory to applying the burnisher, and we have found them exceedingly valuable for this purpose. We would advise every dentist, who would have the satisfaction of operating with sharp instruments, to procure one or more pieces of this valuable stone; and while upon the subject we would suggest to Dr. V. the propriety of furnishing his eastern agencies with an abundant supply of pieces shaped like the pinion file of a clock, for smoothing the surfaces of plugs in the sides of teeth.—*Ibid.*

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*Drugging Cigars.*—Some villain, says the St. Louis Evening Gazette, has discovered a new agent of iniquity, in the way of drugging cigars with narcotics. A boy, about five years of age, having picked up in the street a cigar which had been partly smoked, gave it to a journeyman tailor. He lighted it, but after a few puffs, experiencing some uneasy sensations in his head, threw it down. The little boy then tried it, and exhibited all the symptoms of violent poisoning, and died after eighteen hours' suffering. The tailor, although he exhibited the strongest symptoms of poisoning, is thought by his physician, Dr. Reuben Knox, to be

convalescent. It is the opinion of Dr. K., and two other professional gentlemen, that the cigar had been drugged with some virulent narcotic.

**Medical Miscellany.**—A barrel, containing several parts of a human skeleton, was found by some boys, floating in the upper basin of the Mill Dam, Boston, last week.—In a duel between Dr. Thomas and Mr. F. P. Le Beau, at Norfolk, Va., the former received a severe wound in the right side, which gave rise to serious apprehensions as to the result.—Dr. Shove, of Sing Sing, N. Y., charged with having caused the death of a young girl, by forcibly procuring an abortion, has been acquitted.—According to the Mobile Advertiser, that city never enjoyed better health than at present.—A colored man, who had assisted in giving some medicine to a sick dog, recently died of hydrocephalus in Newark, N. J., as we learn from the Advertiser of that place.—There are 51 incurable cases of insanity in the Insane Department of the County House at Ipswich, Eng.—A meeting has been held in London for the purpose of taking measures to present to Mr. Wakley, the surgeon, Coroner for Middlesex, some testimonial of the high opinion entertained of his services as a public officer. It was resolved that a committee be appointed to raise a sum of money to purchase a handsome piece of silver plate to be presented to him.—Vol. I. of the New York Medical and Surgical Reporter is just completed. The editor says Vol. II. will be deferred awhile, in order that some improvements may be made.—A Swiss journal states that the bulb of the dahlia, when dressed like the potatoe, affords an excellent article of food.—Fearful accounts are brought by the last steamer of the ravages of the cholera in the E. Indies. At Karrachee it seems to have exceeded all former invasions in suddenness of attack and fatality—but a few minutes serving in many instances for the disease to pass through its several stages and carry off the patient.—The deaths in London registered in the week ending Aug. 22d, amounted to 902, being 65 less than in the week previous. Births in the same week, 1278, males and females equal.

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To CORRESPONDENTS.—Another interesting letter from our countryman, Dr. Fisher, has been received from Paris, and will be inserted in the Journal next week.

MARRIED.—At Hartford, Conn., Daniel Brooks, M.D., to Miss Margaret Walkinson.—At Middletown, Conn., Dr. Samuel Richardson to Mrs. Martha J. Prior.

DIED.—In Uxbridge, Mass., George Willard, M.D., 58—a practitioner of great respectability, well known to the profession in Massachusetts.—In Woolwich, Eng., Dr. Marsh, 54, known for his researches on arsenic.—In Bullville, Orange Co., N. Y., Dr. Abel Libott, 43.—At Montpelier, Vt., Dr. Wm. Cullen Warner, of Bristol, killed accidentally by taking strichnine.—At Southbridge, Mass., Dr. J. M. Smith.—At St. Stevens, New Brunswick, Dr. Weston. The last of eleven children was lying dead in the house, of consumption, and the father having stepped out at the door, it being dark, was soon after found drowned in a hogshead of water that had been sunk level with the ground. It was presumed that he fell in and was too weak to extricate himself.

*Report of Deaths in Boston*—for the week ending Oct. 24th, 50.—Males, 30, females, 20. Stillborn, 5. Of consumption, 11—bilious fever, 2—typhus fever, 8—pleurisy fever, 1—dysentery, 2—infantile, 3—cholera infantum, 2—dropsy, 1—diarrhoea, 1—erysipelas, 2—disease of the bowels, 1—inflammation of the lungs, 1—croup, 3—accidental, 1—teething, 1—scarlet fever, 1—dropsy of the brain, 3—old age, 1—cancer, 2—inflammation of the brain, 1—brain fever, 2.

Under 5 years, 22—between 5 and 20 years, 7—between 20 and 40 years, 16—between 40 and 60 years, 4—over 60 years, 1.

*Case of Compound Fracture of the Tibia in Utero, and Congenital Talipes Talus.* By LAWRENCE PROUDFOOT, M.D., of New York.—Mrs. F., aged 28 years, of sanguine temperament, and who has always enjoyed good health, during the sixth month of gestation, and of her third pregnancy, while attempting to pass through a very narrow passage, was severely pressed on the abdomen, and immediately experienced a violent pain in that region, accompanied with nausea and faintness. The following day she was threatened with abortion, having pain and some hemorrhage. These symptoms continued for some days, and occasionally re-appeared in a light degree, up to the time of her delivery, which occurred at full time and was perfectly natural. At birth, the right foot of the child (a female) was found permanently extended and turned upward, pressing against the side of the leg, above the external malleolus.

The tibia of the same side, about the middle of the bone, had apparently been the seat of a compound fracture; the two ends had united, at a slight angle anteriorly, and opposite to this angle there was a cicatrix, evidently of some time standing; there was considerable thickening of the parts near the seat of injury. I visited her on the 3d of June with her attending physician, Dr. Freeman, who had succeeded by bandage, and compresses from its birth, in bringing the foot down, but the case, now in the seventeenth month, presented talipes vulgus complicated with equinus, the outer edge of the foot being very much turned upward, the internal malleolus very prominent, and the external scarcely to be felt. The tendo-Achillis was rigidly contracted, the heel being drawn up about two inches, and the child only enabled to walk by the aid of a high-heeled shoe. I advised the section of the tendons, which was acceded to, and on the 16th of June, assisted by Drs. W. H. Van Buren and Isaacs, I divided the tendons of the peroneus longus and brevis, and the tendo-Achillis, which enabled me to bring down the foot, to a very considerable extent, and entirely overcome the eversion. Some adhesive straps were applied over the wounds, and a bandage from the toes to the knee. A modification of Scarpa's shoe was adjusted, and directed to be constantly worn. Since that time the condition of the foot has greatly improved, and the limb is of the same length as its fellow.

—*New York Journal of Medicine.*

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*Delegates to the National Medical Convention of 1847.*—We perceive that Medical Societies in several States have already elected delegates to the great convention to be holden in Philadelphia, in May next. We have understood that it is a subject of regret with many, that formal invitation was not extended to members of the profession generally throughout the country, who may be inclined to attend the convention, to participate in its deliberations. If we may judge from the spirit manifested at the last convention, there will be no disposition to be exclusive in any sense, and we presume medical men of respectability, who may be present, whether regularly appointed delegates or not, will not only have seats accorded to them, but the liberty of discussion if they desire it.—*Buffalo Medical Journal.*